

Book Sets

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak, Grades 9 and up

It's just a small story really, about among other things: a girl, some words, an accordionist, some fanatical Germans, a Jewish fist-fighter, and quite a lot of thievery. . . .

Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking new novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.

This is an unforgettable story about the ability of books to feed the soul.

The Captain's Dog: My Journey with the Lewis and Clark Tribe by Roland Smith, Grades 5 and up

Born the runt of his litter and gambled away to a rusty old river man, the Newfoundland pup Seaman doesn't imagine his life will be marked by any kind of glory. But when he meets Captain Meriwether Lewis, Seaman finds himself on a path that will make history. Lewis is setting off on his landmark search for the Northwest Passage, and he takes Seaman along. Sharing the curiosity and spirit of his new master, the intrepid dog proves himself a valuable companion at every turn. Part history, part science—and all adventure—this is the thrilling tale of America's greatest journey of discovery.

Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson, Grades 5 - 9

As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight...for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth, in a cruel twist of fate become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons, who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on her owners, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom.

City of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau, Grades 5-7

This book tells the story of the great, underground city of Ember, designed as a last refuge for the human race. But when the storerooms run out of food and the lights begin to fail, it's up to two teens, Lina and Doon, to decipher the fragments of an ancient parchment and find a way out of Ember.

Cracker!: the Best Dog in Vietnam by Cynthia Kadohata, Grades 5-8

Cracker is one of the United States Army's most valuable weapons: a German shepherd trained to sniff out bombs, traps, and the enemy. The fate of entire platoons rests on her keen sense of smell. She's a Big Deal, and she likes it that way. Sometimes Cracker remembers when she was younger, and her previous owner would feed her hot dogs and let her sleep in his bed. That was nice, too. When Cracker is paired with Rick, she isn't so sure about this new owner. He's going to have to prove himself to *her* before *she's* going to prove herself to him. They need to be friends before they can be a team, and they *have* to be a team if they want to get home alive.

Crazy Horse by Mari Sandoz, Adult

Crazy Horse, the legendary military leader of the Oglala Sioux whose personal power and social nonconformity contributed to his reputation as being "strange," fought in many famous battles, including the Little Bighorn, and held out tirelessly against the U.S. government's efforts to confine the Lakotas to reservations. Finally, in the spring of 1877 he surrendered, only to meet a violent death. More than a century later Crazy Horse continues to hold a special place in the hearts and minds of his people. Mari Sandoz offers a powerful evocation of the long-ago world and enduring spirit of "Crazy Horse." Chosen for the 2007 One Book, One Nebraska selection.

The Day My Butt Went Psycho by Andy Griffiths, Grades 3-7

An epic tale of one brave boy and his crazy, runaway butt. Can Zack save the earth from butts gone berserk? Can he defeat the biggest, ugliest, meanest butt the world has ever seen? More important – will Zack and his butt ever find true happiness?

Dealing with Dragons by Patricia Wrede, Grades 4-8

Cimorene is everything a princess is *not* supposed to be: headstrong, tomboyish, smart. . . .And bored. So bored that she runs away to live with a dragon . . . and finds the family and excitement she's been looking for.

Death Zones and Darling Spies by Beverly Deepe Kever, Adult

In *Death Zones and Darling Spies*, Beverly Deepe Kever describes what it was like for a farm girl from Nebraska to find herself halfway around the world, trying to make sense of one of the nation's bloodiest and bitterest wars. She arrived in Saigon as Vietnam's war entered a new phase and American helicopter units and provincial advisers were unpacking. She tells of traveling from her Saigon apartment to jungles where Wild West-styled forts first dotted Vietnam's borders and where, seven years later, they fell like dominoes from communist-led attacks. In 1965 she braved elephant grass with American combat units armed with unparalleled technology to observe their valor—and their inability to distinguish friendly farmers from hide-and-seek guerrillas. **Chosen as the 2015 One Book, One Nebraska selection.**

Dust-Covered Days of Dorie Archer by Barbara Mohrman, Grades 4-8 **Nebraska Author**

Dorie Archer's carefree childhood days became filled with darkness—no fresh air, no sunshine, no rain, no work for the farmers, and no money. Dorie's gripping story brings to life the everyday activities of a Nebraska girl and her family during the Dust Bowl as they struggled to survive the enormous challenges of one of the most trying times in Nebraska history.

Eagle Blue by Michael D'Orso, Adult

Eagle Blue follows the Fort Yukon Eagles, winners of six regional championships in a row, through the course of an entire 28-game season, from their first day of practice in late November to the Alaska State Championship Tournament in March. With insight, frankness, and compassion, Michael D'Orso climbs into the lives of these fourteen boys, their families, and their coach, shadowing them through an Arctic winter of fifty-below-zero temperatures and near-round-the-clock darkness as the Eagles criss-cross Alaska in pursuit of their—and their village's—dream.

Elijah of Buxton by Christopher Paul Curtis, Grades 3-7

Eleven-year-old Elijah lives in Buxton, Canada, a settlement of runaway slaves near the American border. He's the first child in town to be born free, and he ought to be famous just for that. Unfortunately, all that most people see is a "fragile" boy who's scared of snakes and talks too much. But everything changes when a former slave steals money from Elijah's friend, who has been saving to buy his family out of captivity in the South. Now it's up to Elijah to track down the thief--and his dangerous journey just might make a hero out of him, if only he can find the courage to get back home.

Ella Enchanted by Gail Carson Levine, Grades 3-7

How can a fairy's blessing be such a curse? At her birth, Ella of Frell was given a foolish fairy's gift—the "gift" of obedience. Ella must obey any order given to her, whether it's hopping on one foot for a day or chopping off her own head! But strong-willed Ella does not tamely accept her fate. She goes on a quest, encountering ogres, giants, wicked stepsisters, fairy godmothers, and handsome princes, determined to break the curse—and live happily ever after.

Escape: The Story of the Great Houdini by Sid Fleischman, Grades 4-9

How did he walk through walls, escape drowning, and shatter iron chains that were tightly wrapped around him? The rare photos in this book might help you figure it out. So might the exclusive update about the rumor that Houdini was poisoned. But just remember, a true magician never reveals his tricks. . . .

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan, Grades 6-9

Esperanza thought she'd always live with her family on their ranch in Mexico--she'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home, and servants. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California during the Great Depression, and to settle in a camp for Mexican farm workers. Esperanza isn't ready for the hard labor, financial struggles, or lack of acceptance she now faces. When their new life is threatened, Esperanza must find a way to rise above her difficult circumstances--Mama's life, and her own, depend on it.

Everlost by Neal Shusterman, Grades 8 and up

Nick and Allie don't survive the car accident, but their souls don't exactly get where they're supposed to go either. Instead, they're caught halfway between life and death, in a sort of limbo known as Everlost: a shadow of the living world, filled with all the things and places that no longer exist. It's a magical, yet dangerous place where bands of lost kids run wild and anyone who stands in the same place too long sinks to the center of the Earth. When they find Mary, the self-proclaimed queen of lost souls, Nick feels like he's found a home, but Allie isn't satisfied spending eternity between worlds. Against all warnings, Allie begins learning the "Criminal Art" of haunting, and ventures into dangerous territory, where a monster called the McGill threatens all the souls of Everlost. In this imaginative novel, Neal Shusterman explores questions of life, death, and what just might lie in between.

Full Tilt by Neal Shusterman, Grades 7 and up

Sixteen-year-old Blake has always been the responsible one in his dysfunctional family -- the one who drives safely, gets good grades, and looks after his wild younger brother, Quinn. Quinn is his brother's opposite -- a thrill-seeker who's always chasing the next scary rush, no matter what the cost. But Quinn and Blake are in for the surprise of their lives when they're thrust into the world of a bizarre phantom carnival -- and their souls are the price of admission.

Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn, Adult

On a warm summer morning in North Carthage, Missouri, it is Nick and Amy Dunne's fifth wedding anniversary. Presents are being wrapped and reservations are being made when Nick's clever and beautiful wife disappears. Husband-of-the-Year Nick isn't doing himself any favors with cringe-worthy daydreams about the slope and shape of his wife's head, but passages from Amy's diary reveal the alpha-girl perfectionist could have put anyone dangerously on edge. Under mounting pressure from the police and the media—as well as Amy's fiercely doting parents—the town golden boy parades an endless series of lies, deceptions, and inappropriate behavior. Nick is oddly evasive, and he's definitely bitter—but is he really a killer?

Green Glass Sea by Ellen Klages, Grades 5-8

It's 1943, and eleven-year-old Dewey Kerrigan is en route to New Mexico to live with her mathematician father. Soon she arrives at a town that, officially, doesn't exist. It is called Los Alamos, and it is abuzz with activity, as scientists and mathematicians from all over America and Europe work on the biggest secret of all—"the gadget." None of them—not J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Manhattan Project; not the mathematicians and scientists; and least of all, Dewey—know how much "the gadget" is about to change their lives.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, Adult

The book takes place in England during the mid-1940s when the country was recovering from the effects of the long war years. The central character of the novel is Juliet, a thirty something single Londoner who has had some success writing a humorous newspaper column and is now looking for a book subject. Through chance and a mutual love of the power of literature Juliet begins corresponding with a group of diverse people on the British island of Guernsey who used books and the fellowship they found discussing them to help them get through the hideous occupation of their island by the Germans.

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen, Grades 8 and up

Thirteen-year-old Brian Robeson is on his way to visit his father when the single-engine plane in which he is flying crashes. Suddenly, Brian finds himself alone in the Canadian wilderness with nothing but a tattered Windbreaker and the hatchet his mother gave him as a present—and the dreadful secret that has been tearing him apart since his parent's divorce. But now Brian has no time for anger, self pity, or despair—it will take all his know-how and determination, and more courage than he knew he possessed, to survive.

Hattie Big Sky by Kirby Larson, Grades 3-8

Alone in the world, teen-aged Hattie is driven to prove up on her uncle's homesteading claim. For years, sixteen-year-old Hattie's been shuttled between relatives. Tired of being Hattie Here-and-There, she courageously leaves Iowa to prove up on her late uncle's homestead claim near Vida, Montana. With a stubborn stick-to-itiveness, Hattie faces frost, drought and blizzards. Despite many hardships, Hattie forges ahead, sharing her adventures with her friends—especially Charlie, fighting in France—through letters and articles for her hometown paper. Her backbreaking quest for a home is lightened by her neighbors, the Muellers. But she feels threatened by pressure to be a "Loyal" American, forbidding friendships with folks of German descent. Despite everything, Hattie's determined to stay until a tragedy causes her to discover the true meaning of home.

Heat by Mike Lupica, Grades 5-8

Michael Arroyo has a pitching arm that throws serious heat. But his firepower is nothing compared to the heat Michael faces in his day-to-day life. Newly orphaned after his father led the family's escape from Cuba, Michael's only family is his seventeen-year old brother Carlos. If Social Services hears of their situation, they will be separated in the foster-care system—or worse, sent back to Cuba. Together, the boys carry on alone, dodging bills and anyone who asks too many questions. But then someone wonders how a twelve-year-old boy could possibly throw with as much power as Michael Arroyo throws. With no way to prove his age, no birth certificate, and no parent to fight for his cause, Michael's secret world is blown wide open, and he discovers that family can come from the most unexpected sources.

Hidden Talents by David Lubar, Grades 5 and up

Martin Anderson and his friends don't like being called losers. But they've been called that for so long even they start to believe it. Until Martin makes an incredible discovery! Each of his friends has a special hidden talent. Edgeview Alternative School was supposed to be the end of the road. But for Martin and his friends, it might just be a new beginning.

Holes by Louis Sachar, Grades 4-8

Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnats. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the warden makes the boys "build character" by spending all day, every day, digging holes: five feet wide and five feet deep. It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption.

Home Place by Wright Morris, Adult

This account in first-person narrative and photographs of the one-day visit of Clyde Muncy to "the home place" at Lone Tree, Nebraska, has been called "as near to a new fiction form as you could get." Both prose and pictures are homely: worn linoleum, an old man's shoes, well-used kitchen utensils, and weathered siding. Muncy's journey of discovery takes the measure of the man he has become and of what he has left behind.

Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins, Grades 7 and up

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. Long ago the districts waged war on the Capitol and were defeated. As part of the surrender terms, each district agreed to send one boy and one girl to appear in an annual televised event called, "The Hunger Games," a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her district in the Games. The terrain, rules, and level of audience participation may change but one thing is constant: kill or be killed.

I Am a Man: Chief Standing Bear's Journey for Justice by Joe Starita, Adult

"What makes a man a citizen of the country in which he was born? Joe Starita vividly tells the little known story of Standing Bear, whose 1879 case in Federal Court was to the status of American Indians what the Dred Scott case was to African Americans. In Starita's book, the story of a great man from a very small tribe becomes a microcosm for the complex nineteenth century struggle that both the American Indians and the Federal government faced in trying to define the status of native people under the law. He paints an important and compelling picture of the plight of the Ponca, a tribe impaled by misguided paternalism, while hopelessly ensnarled in the bureaucratic red tape of an indecisive and out-of-touch government. It is a story that needs to be told and a book that needs to be read by anyone trying to understand the complex story of America's relationship with its native people." --- Bill Yenne, author of *Sitting Bull* and *Indian Wars*

If I Stay by Gayle Forman, Grades 9 and up

In the blink of an eye everything changes. Seventeen year-old Mia has no memory of the accident; she can only recall what happened afterwards, watching her own damaged body being taken from the wreck. Little by little she struggles to put together the pieces- to figure out what she has lost, what she has left, and the very difficult choice she must make.

Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot, Adult (Nonfiction)

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew.

Inkheart by Cornelia Funke, Grades 3-7

One cruel night, Meggie's father reads aloud from a book called INKHEART-- and an evil ruler escapes the boundaries of fiction and lands in their living room. Suddenly, Meggie is smack in the middle of the kind of adventure she has only read about in books. Meggie must learn to harness the magic that has conjured this nightmare. For only she can change the course of the story that has changed her life forever.

Jazz by Walter Dean Myers, Grades 5-9

This smash-hit picture book of jazz music poems, from award-winning father-son team Walter Dean Myers and Christopher Myers, is now available in paperback. There's a crazy syncopation /and it's tearing through the nation / and it's bringing sweet elation / to every single tune./ It's Jazz/ From bebop to New Orleans, from ragtime to boogie, and every style in between, this collection of Walter Dean Myers's energetic and engaging poems, accompanied by Christopher Myers's bright and exhilarating paintings, celebrates different styles of the American art form, jazz. "JAZZ" takes readers on a musical journey from jazz's beginnings to the present day.

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key by Jack Gantos, Grades 5-9

Joey Pigza's got heart, he's got a mom who loves him, and he's got "dud meds," which is what he calls the Ritalin pills that are supposed to even out his wild mood swings. Sometimes Joey makes bad choices. He learns the hard way that he shouldn't stick his finger in the pencil sharpener, or swallow his house key, or run with scissors. Joey ends up bouncing around a lot - and eventually he bounces himself all the way downtown, into the district special-ed program, which could be the end of the line. As Joey knows, if he keeps making bad choices, he could just fall between the cracks for good. But he is determined not to let that happen.

Laundry News by Andrew Clements, Grades 4-6

The bad news is that Cara Landry is the new kid at Denton Elementary School. The worse news is that her teacher, Mr. Larson, would rather read the paper and drink coffee than teach his students anything. So Cara decides to give Mr. Larson something else to read -- her own newspaper, *The Landry News*. Before she knows it, the whole fifth-grade class is in on the project. But then the principal finds a copy of *The Landry News*, with unexpected results.

Lantern in Her Hand by Bess Streeter Aldrich, Grades 7 and up **Nebraska Story**

After marrying Will Deal and moving to Nebraska, Abbie endures the difficulties of frontier life and raises her children to pursue the ambitions that were once her own.

The Last Newspaper Boy in America by Sue Corbett, Grades 4-7

Wil David can't wait to take over his brother's paper route. For years it has been tradition in his family to hand over the route to the next boy in line on his twelfth birthday and Wil is just about to turn twelve and get his chance to put his sidearm throw into action. But when the newspaper company cancels delivery to Wil's small town, it's up to him to fight to save the route. Along the way, he unravels a carnival mystery, exposes a con artist, rescues his little town, and becomes a true hero.

Lightening Thief by Rick Riordan, Grades 4-9

After getting expelled from yet another school for yet another clash with mythological monsters only he can see, twelve-year-old Percy Jackson is taken to Camp Half-Blood, where he finally learns the truth about his unique abilities: He is a demigod, half human, half immortal. Even more stunning: His father is the Greek god Poseidon, ruler of the sea, making Percy one of the most powerful demigods alive. There's little time to process this news. All too soon, a cryptic prophecy from the Oracle sends Percy on his first quest, a mission to the Underworld to prevent a war among the gods of Olympus. This first installment of Rick Riordan's best-selling series is a non-stop thrill-ride and a classic of mythic proportions.

Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis, Grades 3 and up

Four adventurous siblings—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie—step through a wardrobe door and into the land of Narnia, a land frozen in eternal winter and enslaved by the power of the White Witch. But when almost all hope is lost, the return of the Great Lion, Aslan, signals a great change . . . and a great sacrifice.

Local Wonders by Ted Kooser, Adult **Nebraska Author**

Ted Kooser describes with exquisite detail and humor the place he calls home in the rolling hills of southeastern Nebraska—an area known as the Bohemian Alps. Nothing is too big or too small for his attention. Memories of his grandmother's cooking are juxtaposed with reflections about the old-fashioned outhouse on his property. When casting his eye on social progress, Kooser reminds us that the closing of local schools, thoughtless county weed control, and irresponsible housing development destroy more than just the view. In the end, what makes life meaningful for Kooser are the ways in which his neighbors care for one another and how an afternoon walking with an old dog, or baking a pie, or decorating the house for Christmas can summon memories of his Iowa childhood. This writer is a seer in the truest sense of the word, discovering the extraordinary within the ordinary, the deep beneath the shallow, the abiding wisdom in the pithy Bohemian proverbs that are woven into his essays.

My Daniel by Pam Conrad, Grades 5-8 **Nebraska Story**

Wandering through the Natural History Museum with her grandchildren, Julia Creath feels the presence of her dead brother, Daniel, she remembers a time when fossil fever hit everyone, old and young -- a time when people would kill for those old bones under the ground. Julia becomes the Nebraska farm girl she once was, as she weaves together the story of the great dinosaur rush -- an adventurous tale of love and treachery, but most of all the story of her own childhood, and of the older brother she loved more than anything.

My Dog May Be a Genius by Jack Prelutsky, Grades 2-5

Have you ever encountered an underwater marching band, a pig in a bathing suit, a pet orangutan, or a witch in a hardware store? Have you ever sat with a skunk in a courtroom, shopped for a dinosaur, or conversed with a Bupple, a Wosstrus, a Violinnet, or a Celloon? You will have, once you've read this exuberant collaboration from Jack Prelutsky and his "partner in crime"* James Stevenson. The "reigning czars of silliness"* have once again teamed up to bring readers an irresistible collection of poems that will have tongues twisting, imaginations soaring, and sides aching with laughter. The result is genius, indeed.

Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman, Adult

Richard Mayhew is a young man with a good heart and an ordinary life, which is changed forever when he stops to help a girl he finds bleeding on a London sidewalk. His small act of kindness propels him into a world he never dreamed existed. There are people who fall through the cracks, and Richard has become one of them. And he must learn to survive in this city of shadows and darkness, monsters and saints, murderers and angels, if he is ever to return to the London that he knew.

O Pioneers! by Willa Cather, Grades 7 and up **Nebraska Author**

This powerful early Cather novel, a landmark of American fiction, tells the story of the young Alexandra Bergson, whose dying father leaves her in charge of the family and of the Nebraska lands they have struggled to farm. In Alexandra's lifelong fight to survive and succeed, Cather relates an important chapter in the history of the American frontier.

Once Upon A Town by Bob Greene, Adult (Nonfiction) **Nebraska History**

During World War II, American soldiers from every city and walk of life rolled through North Platte, Nebraska, on troop trains en route to their ultimate destinations in Europe and the Pacific. The tiny town, wanting to offer the servicemen warmth and support, transformed its modest railroad depot into the North Platte Canteen. Every day of the year, every day of the war, the Canteen—staffed and funded entirely by local volunteers—was open from five a.m. until the last troop train of the day pulled away after midnight. Astonishingly, this remote plains community of only 12,000 people provided welcoming words, friendship, and baskets of food and treats to more than six million GIs by the time the war ended.

One False Move by Alex Kava, Adult

Melanie Starks and her seventeen-year-old son have been running one con job or another for as long as she can remember. But she's getting sick of that life - and worried that Charlie is enjoying it too much. So when her brother, Jared, gets out of his life sentence on a technicality and shows up with a plan for a big score, Melanie decides her last job will be helping Jared rob a local bank. And then everything goes terribly wrong.

Operator by David Vinjamuri, Adult

When Michael Herne's high school girlfriend Melissa commits suicide, he makes the fateful decision to return home for her funeral. Michael hasn't stepped foot in his Catskills hometown for more than a dozen years since he left it and a college football scholarship behind to join the Army. Michael quickly learns that his hometown has changed as he is pulled into the web of mystery and corruption surrounding Melissa's death. He will soon confront the abusive ex-boyfriend, a town sheriff with mixed motives and the ruthless Russian gang at the heart of it all. Michael will be forced to choose between two paths - that of the desk-working, college-educated intelligence analyst he has become or the Tier I Army Operator he once was. Only one of these identities will survive as Michael is relentlessly hunted by a series of ruthless men. This meticulously researched, seamlessly plotted thriller is the first in a new series by David Vinjamuri.

Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline, Adult

Penobscot Indian Molly Ayer is close to "aging out" out of the foster care system. A community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping Molly out of juvie and worse... As she helps Vivian sort through her possessions and memories, Molly learns that she and Vivian aren't as different as they seem to be. A young Irish immigrant orphaned in New York City, Vivian was put on a train to the Midwest with hundreds of other children whose destinies would be determined by luck and chance. Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life – answers that will ultimately free them both.

Peak by Roland Smith, Grades 6 and up

After fourteen-year-old Peak Marcello is arrested for scaling a New York City skyscraper, he's left with two choices: wither away in Juvenile Detention or go live with his long-lost father, who runs a climbing company in Thailand. But Peak quickly learns that his father's renewed interest in him has strings attached. *Big* strings. As owner of Peak Expeditions, he wants his son to be the youngest person to reach the Everest summit--and his motives are selfish at best. Even so, for a climbing addict like Peak, tackling Everest is the challenge of a lifetime. But it's also one that could cost him his life.

Peeps by Scott Westerfeld, Grades 9 and up

A year ago, Cal Thompson was a college freshman more interested in meeting girls and partying than in attending biology class. Now, after a fateful encounter with a mysterious woman named Morgan, biology has become, literally, Cal's life. Cal was infected by a parasite that has a truly horrifying effect on its host. Cal himself is a carrier, unchanged by the parasite, but he's infected the girlfriends he's had since Morgan. All three have turned into the ravening ghouls Cal calls Peeps. The rest of us know them as vampires. It's Cal's job to hunt them down before they can create more of their kind. . . .

Rats by Paul Zindel, Grades 6-9

The rats are coming...when mutant rats escape from a Staten Island dump and terrorize the town's citizens, it is up to Sarah and her younger brother, Michael, to stop them from taking over New York City and ending civilization as we know it.

Red Cell by John Kalkowski, Grades 7 and up **Nebraska Author**

Will Conlan is an unconventional thinker. After winning a baseball game with an innovative toss of a rosin bag, he catches the interest of a chief operative of the Homeland Security's Analytic Red Cell. Employing the creative problem solving of philosophers, futurists, and Hollywood movie writers, this intelligence unit is seeking any original ideas about anticipating terrorist plots. As a recent surge of terrorist activity undermines these fresh insights, the operative banks on the notion that Will's youthful imagination, unclouded by the premise of "it can't be done," may provide the key insight they need and seeks to secretly exploit Will's unhindered "out of the box" thinking. Unaware of the magnitude of danger surrounding him, Will uncovers something he wasn't supposed to discover—a connection between a television advertisement and a master terrorist plot. Narrowly surviving, he alone foils a bombing at Wrigley Field. Uncertain about the knowledge he now holds, he has to figure out the terrorists' next target. Will just doesn't realize...it's him.

Re-Gifters (Graphic Novel) by Mike Carey, Grades 7 and up

Meet Jen Dik Seong -- or "Dixie" as she's known to her friends. Korean American, dirt poor, and living on the ragged edge of LA's Koreatown, Dixie's only outlet is the ancient martial art of hapkido. In fact, she's on the verge of winning a championship -- until she falls for fellow hapkido fan/California surfer boy Adam and gets thrown spectacularly off her game. As she struggles to win the tournament -- not to mention Adam's affections - - Dixie learns that in love and in gift-giving, what goes around comes around.

Rescue Josh McGuire by Ben Mikaelson, Grades 6-8

A Daring Rescue...or a Deadly Risk? Ever since Josh's older brother died, his father has been drinking too much and taking his anger out on Josh. But when he orphans a bear cub on a hunting trip, it's more than Josh can stand. Josh insists on bringing the defenseless cub home-only to find out he must surrender it to game officials. Knowing the cub will be given to researchers, Josh makes a defiant choice. Taking only his brother's motorcycle, the cub, and his dog, Josh runs away to the mountains, vowing to stay until the hunting laws are changed. But the mountains hold unexpected menace, and Josh's bid for Justice soon becomes a battle to survive.

Restoring the Burnt Child by William Kloefkorn, Adult

Negotiating the no man's land between ages nine and thirteen, this memoir of a small-town boy's life in 1940s Kansas continues the story William Kloefkorn began in his much-loved volume *This Death by Drowning*. With characteristic humor and in prose as lyrical as his best poetry, Kloefkorn describes the unsentimental education he received at the hands of the denizens of Urie's Barber Shop and the Rexall Drugstore and at the knees of the true characters who made up his family. From the "firefly" stunt that nearly burns down his home to the distant firestorms of World War II, fire holds an endless range of subtle and surprising lessons for the boy, whose impressions Kloefkorn conveys with the immediacy, naiveté, and poignancy of youth—and reconsiders with the wisdom and distance of age.

Rules by Cynthia Lord, Grades 4-7

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public"---in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?

Running Out of Time by Margaret Peterson Haddix, Grades 4-7

Jessie lives with her family in the frontier village of Clifton, Indiana, in 1840 -- or so she believes. When diphtheria strikes the village and the children of Clifton start dying, Jessie's mother reveals a shocking secret -- it's actually 1996, and they are living in a reconstructed village that serves as a tourist site. In the world outside, medicine exists that can cure the dread disease, and Jessie's mother is sending her on a dangerous mission to bring back help.

Sarah's Key by Tatiana deRosnay, Adult

Paris, July 1942: Sarah, a ten year-old girl, is brutally arrested with her family by the French police in the Vel' d'Hiv' roundup, but not before she locks her younger brother in a cupboard in the family's apartment, thinking that she will be back within a few hours. Paris, May 2002: On Vel' d'Hiv's 60th anniversary, journalist Julia Jarmond is asked to write an article about this black day in France's past. Through her contemporary investigation, she stumbles onto a trail of long-hidden family secrets that connect her to Sarah. Julia finds herself compelled to retrace the girl's ordeal, from that terrible term in the Vel d'Hiv', to the camps, and beyond. As she probes into Sarah's past, she begins to question her own place in France, and to reevaluate her marriage and her life.

Saving Cee Cee Honeycutt by Beth Hoffman, Adult

Twelve-year-old CeeCee Honeycutt is in trouble. For years, she has been the caretaker of her mother, Camille, the town's tiara-wearing, lipstick-smeared laughingstock, a woman who is trapped in her long-ago moment of glory as the 1951 Vidalia Onion Queen of Georgia. When tragedy strikes, Tootie Caldwell, CeeCee's long-lost great-aunt, comes to the rescue and whisks her away to Savannah. There, CeeCee is catapulted into a perfumed world of prosperity and Southern eccentricity—one that appears to be run entirely by strong, wacky women.

The Schwa Was Here by Neal Shusterman, Grades 6-9

They say his clothes blend into the background, no matter where he stands. They say a lot of things about the Schwa, but one thing's for sure: no one ever noticed him. Except me. My name is Antsy Bonano and I was the one who realized the Schwa was "functionally invisible" and used him to make some big bucks. But I was also the one who caused him more grief than a friend should. So if you all just shut up and listen, I'll tell you everything there is to know about the Schwa, from how he got his name, to what really happened with his mom. I'll spill everything. Unless, of course, "the Schwa Effect" wipes him out of my brain before I'm done.

Shiloh by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Grades 3-7

When Marty Preston comes across a young beagle in the hills behind his home, it's love at first sight—and also big trouble. It turns out the dog, which Marty names Shiloh, belongs to Judd Travers, who drinks too much and has a gun—and abuses his dogs. So when Shiloh runs away from Judd to Marty, Marty just has to hide him and protect him from Judd. But Marty's secret becomes too big for him to keep to himself, and it exposes his entire family to Judd's anger. How far will Marty have to go to make Shiloh his?

Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie by David Lubar, Grades 7 and up

This sparkling novel covers a year in the life of high school freshmen Scott Hudson, who is sideswiped by the unexpected news that his mother is about to have another baby. In a hilarious and touching journal addressed to the unborn intruder, Scott bares his soul as he copes with the trials and tribulations of a life that is changing faster than he wants it to. Filled with Lubar's trademark wit, enlivened by unexpected twists and turns of plot, *Sleeping Freshman* is widely considered as one of the best YA novels of 2005.

Stranded by Ben Mikaelson, Grades 5-8

Koby's whole life changed after the accident four years ago. Between the smothering concern of her separated parents and the awkward glances from the kids at school, Koby only feels at home when she is on the ocean in her dinghy. That all changes when she rescues two dying pilot whales. Day after day, she visits the whales as they begin their long road to recovery. She finds a new friend in Dr. Tracy Michaels, a veterinarian, and gains the admiration of her classmates. But most importantly, Koby starts to recognize her own strength and courage.

Sugar Queen by Sarah Addison Allen, Adult

Josey Cirrini is sure of three things: winter is her favorite season, she's a sorry excuse for a Southern belle, and sweets are best eaten in the privacy of her closet. For while Josey has settled into an uneventful life in her mother's house, her one consolation is the stockpile of sugary treats and paperback romances she escapes to each night.... Until she finds her closet harboring Della Lee Baker, a local waitress who is one part nemesis—and two parts fairy godmother. With Della Lee's tough love, Josey's narrow existence quickly expands. She even bonds with Chloe Finley, a young woman who is hounded by books that inexplicably appear when she needs them—and who has a close connection to Josey's longtime crush. Soon Josey is living in a world where the color red has startling powers, and passion can make eggs fry in their cartons. And that's just for starters.

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson, Grades 7 and up

Within Cole Matthews lie anger, rage and hate. Cole has been stealing and fighting for years. This time he caught Alex Driscoll in the parking lot and smashed his head against the sidewalk. Now, Alex may have permanent brain damage and Cole is in the biggest trouble of his life. Cole is offered Circle Justice: a system based on Native American traditions that attempts to provide healing for the criminal offender, the victim and the community. With prison as his only alternative, Cole plays along. He says he wants to repent, but in his heart Cole blames his alcoholic mom, his abusive dad, wimpy Alex -- everyone but himself -- for his situation. Cole receives a one year banishment to a remote Alaskan island. There, he is mauled by Mysterious white bear of Native American legend. Hideously injured, Cole waits for his death. His thoughts shift from anger to humility. To survive, he must stop blaming others and take responsibility for his life. Rescuers arrive to save Cole's but it is the attack of the Spirit Bear that may save his soul.

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt, Grades 5-8

Doomed to—or blessed with—eternal life after drinking from a magic spring, the Tuck family wanders about trying to live as inconspicuously and comfortably as they can. When ten-year-old Winnie Foster stumbles on their secret, the Tucks take her home and explain why living forever at one age is less a blessing than it might seem. Complications arise when Winnie is followed by a stranger who wants to market the spring water for a fortune.

Unwind by Neal Shusterman, Grades 7 and up

In America after the Second Civil War, the Pro-Choice and Pro-Life armies came to an agreement: The Bill of Life states that human life may not be touched from the moment of conception until a child reaches the age of thirteen. Between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, however, a parent may choose to retroactively get rid of a child through a process called "unwinding." Unwinding ensures that the child's life doesn't "technically" end by transplanting all the organs in the child's body to various recipients. Now a common and accepted practice in society, troublesome or unwanted teens are able to easily be unwound.

The Usual Mistakes by Erin Flanagan, Adult

These characters may be the usual suspects, making the usual mistakes, but their stories are not the usual fare. Populated by pretenders, ex-cons, and wannabes who bend the rules, break the law, and risk everything to salvage their own hearts, the twelve stories in *The Usual Mistakes* conduct readers into a world where betrayal is just a beginning. Deception, infidelity, even death—where a person goes from there is the mainspring of Erin Flanagan's fiction, and in the turns her characters take, we find rare insights: that we are often wedded to one another because of, not in spite of, our flaws and that this paradoxical connection may be cause for hope.

White Star: A Dog on the Titanic by Marty Crisp, Grades 4-8

The year is 1912, and twelve-year-old Sam Harris is traveling from England to America on the grand ship the Titanic. Sam is lonely at first, but is soon delighted to discover that there are dogs aboard! When Sam volunteers to help out in the kennel, he meets Star, a spunky Irish setter that belongs to the ship's captain. Sam and Star become fast friends, and when disaster strikes, the boy and dog must rely on each other more than ever before. The harrowing, breathless conclusion -- and fascinating historical information -- makes this boy-and-dog tale truly unforgettable.